

Dear Energy & Technology Committee Members,

My name is Laura Cassenti. I apologize for being unable to testify in person tomorrow during the listening session. I appreciate the opportunity to submit my testimony, however.

I have some concerns about how Eversource handled the power outage following Tropical Storm Isaias on Aug 4. In particular, I am concerned about how they handle power outages for people who are medically reliant on electricity, especially during a pandemic. Also, the difficulties reporting the outage (it took 7 hours to get through) and lack of communication throughout the outage are also disconcerting.

My daughter, Anne Miller, has a medical condition and relies on electricity to stay healthy. She is on their list of those with medical needs. She has trouble regulating her body temperature. When she overheats (or gets too cold), she has seizures, and she can stop breathing during seizures, especially if we can't cool her down. In short, we rely on A/C in the warmer months, when the temperatures are above 73°F with humidity and 76°F without. I also run a breathing monitor at night, which acts as a seizure monitor. Without it, I periodically have to check on her throughout the night.

We are fortunate to have a portable generator to run our small central A/C unit plus a few other necessities (like the well-pump for water and the fridge). It works well enough when the outdoor temperatures are in the low 80s. If they go higher, I need to run window units, but our generator cannot handle the extra A/Cs. With the power still out and rising temperatures on Aug 9th and a heat index warning predicted on Aug 10th, I was growing worried (not to mention exhausted from little sleep, since I do not want to run the generator when no one is monitoring it). The status of our outage was still "Evaluating," even though it was clear that it was a blown fuse, possibly two, on a pole or two on our street. Our outage was isolated to our street and only involved 16 houses. However, by the time I Tweeted on Aug 9th, copying Eversource, media sources, and politicians, they were working on outages of our size or smaller (with only one or two in our area that were slightly larger), according to their outage map.

A rep called me on the afternoon of Aug 9, telling me that the registry does not apply to outages due to storms, that the registry was used just to warn people on it that a storm was coming, that it was too difficult to take medical problems into consideration during restoration, and that they were going to restore our electricity when they got around to it. They said that if my daughter was in peril, I could take her to a cooling center. However, as I pointed out to them, we're in the middle of a pandemic and that those who medically rely on electricity are the very same people who are at high risk from this illness. Making them move to cooling centers and out of quarantine was putting them at risk. I was then told to call the Red Cross. They passed the buck. They offered no help, only good thoughts that all would turn out well.

I do not feel that they care about us as customers, especially considering the exorbitant rate increases right before the storm, while we're in the middle of a pandemic, and following a strong second quarter performance for their company. If I had a choice, I would choose a different company that planned better for the outage and showed that they cared about us, the consumers. Telling me that a problem is "too hard" also tells me that they're not willing to put in the effort to find solutions to help their most vulnerable customers. (As someone with a background in engineering, I have to wonder why they can't give a weight to homes with customers who rely on electricity in their restoration models -- assuming that they use restoration models to determine the best way to restore electricity. Why can't homes with

medically fragile people have a weight of say, 5.0 or 10.0, and those with medically fragile residents have a weight of 1.0? This way, large outages still take precedent, but, when you're down to equivalently-sized outages, those who need electricity for survival will have their power restored sooner.)

However, even though I don't feel like they care about us and that I would prefer to switch companies, I don't have a choice. (Public power lines make it hard to have a choice). They are acting like a monopoly with little to no customer accountability. Something needs to be done. They need to be held accountable in some way. I hope something can be done. People shouldn't die because the electric company failed to do its job.

If you need any more information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,
Laura Cassenti